



Children of the island play a major role in the Tapati festival activities including the Carnival/Parade. Here, dressed in tapa and grass skirts, they display a huge version of a traditional kai-kai (string figures).

NEWS AND NOTES

What's New in Polynesia

Hawai'i

The dreaded brown tree snake of Guam still is trying to worm its way into Hawai'i. A 29 inch long snake was found alive at Schofield Barracks. State agriculture officials and environmentalists say the brown tree snake could wreck havoc on native bird species; it also attacks poultry, small pets and is known to bite children. In recent years the Hawaiian legislature appropriated \$100,000 for a program to guard against the snake and Congress appropriated \$100,000 to train dogs to detect them by checking planes and ships arriving from Guam. Since 1981, seven of these snakes have been found in Hawai'i.

Honolulu Advertiser, December 22, 1994

Kiribati

Kiribati's government has decided to ignore the International Dateline that transects the mid-Pacific nation. Formerly the Line and Phoenix Islands were 23 hours behind the date and time in the rest of Kiribati. Now they will have the same date although they will be one hour ahead of the rest of Kiribati's islands.

Honolulu Advertiser, December 26, 1994

Fiji

The University of the South Pacific's International Student Exchange Program, ISEP, received a grant of US \$3000 from the United States Information Services of the US Embassy in Suva. The fund helps defray administrative costs which include maintenance allowance and health insurance for two USP students who spend a calendar year at an American university.

Vice-Chancellor E. Solofa of the USP spoke at a workshop on Hazardous Waste and Water Quality, noting the urgent need for waste management in Pacific Island countries. He said that many cases of destructive exploitation of forest in the

Pacific Islands have had full participation and sanction of the local communities which were more concerned with making money from what they claimed was their indigenous right. Waste management has become a priority environmental issue for the region; pollution has caused significant degradation of the coastal environment. The workshop was organized by the Chemical Society of the South Pacific.

University of the South Pacific Bulletin, 27(41) 1994.

The Institute of Education, University of the South Pacific, will hold an annual Creative Writing Competition to encourage creative writing skills in schools around the region. The director announced that there are now sufficient short stories, poems and drama material to publish a small anthology. Several Fiji students won prizes in the recent contest.

University of the South Pacific Bulletin, 27 (44) 1994.

New Zealand

● The Pan-Pacific Conference XII will be held from 29 May to 1 June, 1995, in Dunedin and Queenstown, N.Z. Organized by the Pan-Pacific Business Association, the conference will serve as an important forum for the exchange of ideas and information to promote understanding and cooperation among Pacific countries. For information, contact Prof. Sang Lee or Linda Rohn, Dept. of Management, 209 College of Business Administration, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. PO Box 880491, Lincoln, NE 68588-0491, USA.

● In November, the New Zealand Department of Conservation attempted to aurally distribute poison "1080" for possum control in the Maungamuka ranges. A protest resulted and the Maungamuka drops were called off. However an operation was carried out over the Waima area; despite warning signs, poison pellets were found floating in rivers in the communities adjacent to the aerial drop. Government agencies looked upon the protest as an effort to stop control of possums; however, for the Maori, the issue was not possums but the use of poison and environmental damage.

Pacific News Bulletin, 9(12), December 1994.

What's New in Hangarua

● According to *El Mercurio de Valparaiso* for 16 November 1994, 'TVN' will soon begin to transmit directly to Easter Island since the Consejo Nacional de Televisión has approved supplementary funds for such service. The Consejo acted on a petition from the government of the V Region. This linkup will 'substantially increase the liaison of the island and the continent'.

Already TV has made considerable inroads into the island culture. Soap operas are watched avidly by all ages; at 8 p.m. on the program night, streets are deserted--everyone is glued to the TV.

● The Intendent of the V Region, Hardy Knittel, reported that President Frei has announced that \$5.1 million dollars

will be assigned for repairs to the Mataverí landing strip, and \$714,000 will go toward paving more streets in Hangaroa. Work on the runway will begin sometime in October and will continue up to March, when the airport will be closed for a month.

In addition, the subsidy for maritime transport of freight to the island will be increased and in the future, one shipping company will be selected after each 18 month period. There will be a regular schedule of shipment dates. Also, the Chilean Air Force will make at least three flights to the island each year to bring supplies.

The Ministry of Interior appears ready to assign more funds for maintenance and repairs of some of the archaeological sites. Tongariki will have an additional \$55,000 to finish the restoration project, and \$24,000 will go for repairs of the stone houses at Orongo's ceremonial site.

- Lan Chile airline expanded its flight schedule to Easter Island, incorporating 2 new flights a week, beginning in December. This makes 4 flights per week to Mataverí's airport. Lan Chile noted that "Far from discriminating, this airline favors the Rapa Nui islanders with a special discount . . ." This response was in reply to islanders who claim to be affected by Lan Chile's policy toward them, and who have stated they intend to talk to the President of Chile about said discrimination. Lan Chile added that they are the only private airline to subsidize a route to the island. *[Due to frequent overbooking, the trick is to get ON the airplane. In November, police had to control a rowdy crowd of stranded travelers at Mataverí airport trying to fight their way to the ticket counter.]*

- In 1994 there were approximately 8000 tourists to the island, according to the island's tourist office. However, many of these arrived by cruise ship, staying only part of one day. In January, a cruise ship arrived with 400 passengers and crew of 300; they were on the island a few hours. The day before, a special charter flew in from Europe with 300 tourists. They spent one night and left the next day. This type of tourism leaves little money behind; only those renting buses and vans seem to benefit. Conversely, such heavy concentrations of tourists impact the sites: consider the possibilities for disturbance at Rano Raraku or Orongo, using a low estimate of 800 persons in two days.

- The land protest continues. A huge tent is still erected within the church yard, and signs protesting the indigenous law and demanding return of land to islanders are prominently displayed (in several languages). The protest was denounced by Mauricio Huenchulaf, director of CONADI [National Corporation of Indigenous Development] who said that any indigenous movement asking for restitution of land that once belonged to their ancestors 'leads down a path with little possibility of success'. He added that Chile has an indigenous law and, although not perfect, it is an instrument that should be used.

El Mercurio, 1 February 1995

- Restoration work at Orongo has repaired the stone houses that collapsed in recent years. A few new signs, warning visitors not to climb on the house roofs, etc., also have been added.

- The new building housing the governor's offices is completed and more roads are now paved in the village, one continuing all the way to the airport. Several new shops have opened up on the main streets and a 20,000 square-foot shopping mall with supermarket is nearly completed. This latter development, on Policarpo Toro Street, is loosely based on the Ala Moana center in Hawai'i and will include a large automatic self-service market, exhibit space for artists, a garden court and 10-15 shops, all opening on the covered mall. The complex, being developed by former Governor Sergio Rapu, will create 33 direct jobs and will break with tradition by staying open during siesta. Rapu intends to push local produce with the idea in mind that this will increase local food production and make islanders less dependent upon imported foods from the mainland.

- A former doctor in the island hospital has opened a private clinic in town.

- The aging and decrepit Hotel Hangaroa will be torn down and replaced. It has been purchased by a mainland hotel chain which will construct 'cabins' with ocean views, not a highrise. They will also restore an ancient *ahu* which used to be on the hotel grounds.

- The island's new mayor, Petero Edmunds Paoa, has proposed that Rapa Nui be made a separate region of Chile. The Alcalde explained that islanders are not trying to be independent but wish to turn the island into its own region, thus making Rapa Nui the door to the Pacific-Asia. Such changes would eliminate delays, incomprehension and, most of all, the bureaucracy that results from being a part of the V Region of the county. Edmunds stated that this aspiration is



not connected to the movement that has taken place on the island with the creation of the Counsel of Elders #2 which is asking for a return of the all the land to native islanders.

Edmunds noted that being a region would allow the island to have its own budget, and to find its own solutions for problems of health, education and public works. Rapa Nui would have its own representatives in the parliament and, through consulates, better relationships with its cultural brothers of Hawaii, Tahiti, New Zealand, Tonga and Samoa. He stated that the Rapanui will always have an inclination towards Polynesia rather than the Chilean continent and this preference is due to the historic origins of the islanders, for they are the same people, speak the same tongue and have the same cultural base: "No flag, no foreign tongue, and no country can forbid the Rapanui nor our brothers to join together." The origin of the Rapa Nui people has been misunderstood on the continent and has not been valued in its full dimension as, for example, what happened four years ago when the French printed four stamps with maps of the Pacific islands, one showing Easter Island. This caused a furor on the continent raising specters of a French takeover and generated a problem that "shamed the relations between Chile and its friends like France." [See *RNJ* 5(4):64-5].

One of the irritating factors for islanders is the discrimination they feel, particularly in supply problems. Even though fuel is subsidized by the government, other items of prime necessity cost 4 to 5 times more than on the continent. What irritates them most is that the same Chilean products, sold in Tahiti, cost half the price than what is charged on the island.

The Rapa Nui people estimate that, with the creation of a new region, they would have various representatives and could quit begging for financial support, and many new jobs would be created. This could mean that Rapa Nui professionals who have returned to the island would not have to dedicate themselves to fishing or small scale agriculture to make a living. Measures also should be taken to provide more income such as exclusive stamps for Easter Island (like Pitcairn), the establishment of an entry tax of \$10 dollars at the airport, and taxes for merchant ships.

Mayor Edmunds, citing the repair of the important archaeological site at Tongariki which was financed by the Japanese, added that it is shameful that other countries worry more than Chile about the maintenance of the island's archaeological patrimony.

El Mercurio, 12 February 1995.

● A statue at Vinapu was vandalized in January. Eyes and a 'happy face' smile were scratched into the statue's face. Mayor Edmunds went on the radio to denounce those



islanders who defaced the statue and asked for help in identifying the culprits.

● The Rapa Nui Outrigger Club is associated with Kahu Kahu o Hera (which has 120 members). However only 30 of these are directly involved with the Outrigger Club. At this time, only one outrigger is on the island (donated by New Zealand), and members practice once a week. The Rapa Nui Outrigger team hopes to get full training when they come to Los Angeles in July of 1995. Their future goals are to link up with other Polynesian outrigger groups.

● This year's Tapati Festival poster shows a photograph of a *moai* with a group of islanders. The poster was sent around South America to be displayed in the hope that it might encourage visitation to the island. One handsome islander, prominently featured on the poster, was enjoying his 15 minutes of fame. However, police in Argentina saw the poster and recognized him as a fugitive from justice. The International Police came and took him away. What price glory?

● *El Mercurio de Santiago* (10 November 1994) announced a pending 'Maritime Adventure' organized by a Spanish explorer, Kittin Muñoz. Muñoz and 10 others (including some Rapanui) will navigate the seas of Oceania for one year, to demonstrate that the first inhabitants of the island came in the 4th century AD from Peru and Bolivia, not Polynesia. The experimental journey is to begin in October 1995 when the raft will set out from Rapa Nui's Anakena Beach.

Muñoz is the principle organizer of this adventure that will cost 2 million dollars and has the hope of proving Heyerdahl's theory of South American settlement of Polynesia. Muñoz has been involved in other adventures including a trip on a sailboard from Monte Carlo to Tunisia; in 1988 he spent five months on a reed 'junk', 17 meters long.

The boat to be constructed, called "Matarangi", will be 30 meters long, 8 meters wide and have 3 masts of 20 meters each. The shell of the boat will have 3 mono-shells united to make a trimaran and it will have a double stern and one prow. Construction will begin in March 1995 and will be made on a base of *totoro* reed. Braided *totoro*, according to Muñoz, is a material that drains by itself and has the capacity of absorption and drainage. "A first proof of this boat will be made in January when the same builders model a raft 10 meters long at the edge of Lake Titicaca. The main objective of this experiment is to prove definitely the great capacity of resistance of the rafts in ancient times in their transoceanic voyages."

The idea is that, through this trip, says Muñoz, it will be possible to obtain an approximate idea on how the islands were discovered and inhabited. He added that they "will try to prove the existence of cultural, botanical and blood parallelisms between civilizations separated by sea, which can be due to contacts obtained through the media of direct experience." [For a trenchant critique of this expedition, see

comments by our editor, Frank Bock, on page 37-38].

- *El Mercurio de Santiago* (15 November 1994) reports that Rapa Nui has a Rotary Club. It has been functioning "for some months" with 30 associates, 5 of them women. The president is Alfredo Tuki Pate. A delegation from the continent donated 600 school texts and teaching videos to the island's school, which is attended by 700 students.

- Work has begun on the rehabilitation of the Sebastian Englert Museum. The project involves repairing the roof, the exhibition hall and transforming a storeroom into a depository for collections. This will enable the Museum to take better care of its archaeological and ethnographical materials, according to the director of the Museum, Claudio Gómez.

- The most astonishing sight on Rapa Nui, so far: a cream-colored Mercedes Benz. This vehicle was spotted driving in a cloud of dust near La Pérouse bay--in use as a taxi carrying some tourists around the island.

- The island continues to be plagued with supply problems. The latest attempt to send supplies was a fiasco: the ship *Guamblin* never left Valparaíso. It was supposed to sail on December 21, but islanders in Valparaíso decided not to load their cargo once they saw the rusting hulk (a reconditioned fish factory ship) tied up at the pier. Adding insult to injury, the shippers had raised the price 37%. Upon examination, the ship was found to be unsafe in any waters. Repairs were made, the ship passed inspection and was scheduled to sail on December 30th. But islanders still balked, noting that it was leaking fuel. Meanwhile fruit and vegetables rotted on the pier, and Congressman Bartolucci blasted the Intendencia for 'negligence'. A Panamanian freighter (the "*Nova*") was contracted and finally sailed for the island on 9 January carrying loads of Christmas gifts and a big truck. Another small ship that supplies petroleum platforms in the Straits of Magellan took the remainder of items that the *Nova* did not, including 33 head of cattle, tons of lumber and steel and 3,000 bags of cement.

El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 9 January 1995.

- Some small *toromiro* plants are growing the greenhouse at the CONAF gardens. The five-year old tree that formerly grew here died recently. It seems these native trees can no longer adapt to changes in soil and vegetation. We were told that many varieties of bananas are also dying due to introduced pests from Chile.

- The Minister of Defense, Edmundo Pérez Yoma, declared that plans are made for construction of a new port on the island, at Mataverí Otai, near Hanga Roa. The project would have an approximate cost of 50 million dollars and a capacity of receiving ships up to 5,000 tons. A private company is interested in building the port (a Chilean-German enterprise). He added that the location should be re-studied as it is a

difficult place to build a port due to the steep coastline, and it is possible that cheaper alternatives might be found.

El Mercurio, 24 December 1994.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

United States

- Breathless headlines from the *Weekly World News* (November 8, 1994) state: "Mystery Statues found in North Carolina Valley!" This 'off the wall' story claims that 23 stone 'mystery heads' have been found in a mountain valley, "...stunning archaeologists who are unable to account for this astounding archaeological discovery". A photograph shows three statues from *Rano Raraku* with the caption: "Photo taken at secret North Carolina site shows three of the 23 stone head figures found in the area." Reading further, it seems that the 23 heads are actually underground, but were located with a "special scanning device". A local archaeologist declares he is looking into Indian legends in order to unlock the mystery of how Easter Island statues got to North Carolina. [*Buena suerte, baby*].

- *Rapanuiphile* Russell Morgan informs us that noted US film critics, Roger Ebert and Gene Siskel, recently listed the ten worst films of 1994. Guess which film made their No. 2 spot? Right. *Rapa-Nui*. The most factual portion of the movie, the race for the egg, was the part that the critics found contrived and unbelievable. And Dorothy Feltham sent in copy from the *San Francisco Chronicle* quoting Chilean film critics (it just opened in Chile): *El Mercurio* states that the movie was greeted with vicious reviews and disgruntled movie-goers who found the plot and people 'cardboard' and the story line 'infantile'.

Austria

On Friday, 18 November 1994 at 8:15 in the evening, the Austrian science program NOVA broadcast (from Vienna) a 15-minute documentary about Rapa Nui, written and directed by Dr. Jos Rosenthal, who years ago flew to the island with Elena Charola. The stress of the short program was on the "mysteries revealed" theme, such as the environmental collapse being the reason for the social upheaval and termination of the *moai* carving; but they also panned the Hollywood movie with terrific scenes of the waste *moai* rotting in the Hangaroa rubbish tip and a good statement by José Miguel Ramírez about the damage the filming did to nature, sites, and life style. The Austrian team flew to Meersburg to interview Dr. Steven Roger Fischer about his recent breakthrough in the decipherment of *rongo rongo*, and they showed their highly edited version of his statement to the effect that we can 'read' parts of the script at last. Fischer is shown explaining, in German, how a whole sentence from the "Santiago Staff" can be read. The program was well done and scientifically unassailable, something that seems to be more and more par for the course of late, particularly among German-language broadcasts.